



For Immediate Release  
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## Crime Prevention Tip of the Month- Domestic Violence

Harrisonburg, VA – As a continuation of our Crime Prevention initiative, this month’s tips surrounds the awareness and prevention of Domestic Violence. In 2015, the Harrisonburg Police Department (HPD) responded to 385 Calls for Service relating to domestic violence. Over 150 arrests were made, 14 of which were felony arrests. As more attention is brought to domestic violence, it is important for everyone to make themselves familiar with the indicators even if they are not a victim themselves. Domestic Violence is a very sensitive topic and many victims are not aware of services and resources available.

There are many people who believe that only a male is capable of being the abuser and only a female can suffer abuse. The truth is anyone can be the victim of domestic violence and abuse happens in all walks of life. Warning signs on both sides of the equation that forms a hostile relationship may include the following:

### ABUSER:

- Blames others for their behavior
- May demonstrate extreme jealous behaviors
- Low self-esteem
- May have a violent history or charges from similar crimes
- Deflecting their personal struggles onto the person they are in a relationship with

### VICTIMS:

- May have suffered injury in the past from abuse
- May experience mental health crisis or depression, anxiety, and a sense of worthlessness
- Blames himself/herself for the violence
- Often feel that they are “trapped” and no one can help them

It is common for incidents of domestic violence to go unreported. The majority of the calls for service that police respond to are initiated by neighbors or concerned friend’s of the victim.



**Prevention Tips:**

- Watch for personality changes such as accusing behavior, aggressive behavior, or mood swings
- In the beginning stages of a relationship- trust your instincts and pay attention to warning signs
- Victims may feel pressured into continuing a relationship with thoughts that the person they are with will change
- Locate a safe place such as the home of a trusted friend, neighbor, or family member
- Seek counseling assistance
- Reach out to local services provided for victims and their families

When violent or aggressive incidents take place report the incident to police as soon as you can safely do so. The Code of Virginia instructs police to take action and assist victims with many additional resources. Police officers on scene can assist victims in attempting to obtain an Emergency Protective Order (EPO) for their safety.

For those citizens who may recognize the signs of domestic violence in a neighbor, friend, or family member: take action. Reach out to that person if you believe they are a victim and being abused. Remember that most victims feel a sense of responsibility for their abusers actions and are often ashamed to let anyone know. Do not give up easily, as change takes time. Victims of domestic violence come from all walks of life, all cultures, all incomes, all ages, and religious backgrounds. They all share similar feelings of guilt, helplessness, isolation, fear, and shame. If you or someone you know is a victim and would like more information on ways to end the violence contact your local police department. A resource sheet is provided below.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-7233
The Collins Center (Sexual Abuse)	540-434-2272
First Step Domestic Violence Shelter	540-434-0295
Sentara RMH	540-689-1000
Community Services Board	540-434-1941
Harrisonburg Police Department	540-437-2650
Rockingham County Sheriff's Office	540-564-3800
Magistrate's Office	540-564-3848

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